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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1752 (2007), by which the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 15 October 2007. It provides an update of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, since my report of 18 July 2007 (S/2007/439).

2. My Special Representative, Jean Arnault, continued to lead the Mission. He was assisted by the Chief Military Observer, Major General Niaz Muhammad Khan Khattak (Pakistan). The strength of UNOMIG on 1 October 2007 stood at 133 military observers and 19 police officers (see annex).

II. Political process

3. During the reporting period, UNOMIG continued its efforts to maintain stability in the zone of conflict, help prevent the escalation of tensions and facilitate dialogue between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides. The overall approach to the settlement of the conflict remains that a successful dialogue on security, the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, economic rehabilitation and humanitarian issues would help bring about a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, taking into account the principles contained in the document entitled "Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi", its transmittal letter (see S/2002/88, para. 3) and additional ideas by the sides.

4. My Special Representative maintained regular contact with both sides, as well as with the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General. He took part in the meeting of the senior representatives of the Group of Friends, which took place in Berlin on 20 September.

5. The Mission followed up with the parties on the outcome of the high-level meeting of the Group of Friends, held in Bonn, Germany, on 27 and 28 June and chaired by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno (see S/2007/439, paras. 8-14). In keeping with the understandings reached there, in early August UNOMIG convened the Joint Fact-Finding Group,

which also includes the two parties and the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), to investigate the disappearance of David Sigua (see S/2007/182, para. 15). The Joint Fact-Finding Group has held four meetings to date. On 23 August, the Mission facilitated a meeting on African swine fever between the chiefs of the respective veterinary services, which took place in Gali and addressed the spread of the disease. Work on missing persons continued under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The quadripartite meetings, bringing together the two sides, the CIS peacekeeping force and UNOMIG, did not resume by the end of July, as had been called for at the Bonn meeting. In response to the proposed new terms of reference of the quadripartite meetings prepared by UNOMIG (see S/2007/439, para. 39), the Georgian side presented its views and suggestions in the second half of September. There was no progress on other issues discussed during the February and June meetings of the senior representatives of the Group of Friends, with participation by both sides, which were chaired by the United Nations.

6. While a certain degree of progress was made in the dialogue on technical and humanitarian issues, the gap between the two sides on political dialogue remained. The Abkhaz side continued to link the resumption of such dialogue to the return to the status quo ante in the upper Kodori Valley before the Georgian special operation there in July 2006, while the Georgian side insisted that the present situation there was not negotiable. The Georgian side continued to stress the need for a change in the peacekeeping and negotiations mechanisms, which the Abkhaz side is not prepared to underwrite. In the wake of my last report, the Georgian side also criticized the approach followed by the United Nations and the Group of Friends, which, in its view, relegated to the background issues of utmost priority to Georgia, in particular the political settlement of the conflict and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. In this context, the Georgian side put forward the proposal for a review of the United Nations peace process, with a view to enhancing its effectiveness in resolving those priority issues.

7. During the period under review, the Georgian side took strong issue with what it described as the illegal acquisition of State and private property in Abkhazia, Georgia; the military exercises carried out by the Abkhaz de facto armed forces from 20 to 24 August (see para. 10 below); and the operations of the CIS peacekeeping force (see para. 16 below). For its part, the Abkhaz side expressed concern over what it termed a dangerous Georgian military build-up, which was illustrated in its view by recent increases in the military budget of the Georgian Government and the continued armed presence in the upper Kodori Valley. Furthermore, both the Georgian Government and the Abkhaz de facto authorities took very strong public positions following the deadly clash between the sides on 20 September (see para. 18 below).

8. I met President Saakashvili, on 26 September, in the margins of the General Assembly in New York. The President stated Georgia's readiness for dialogue and support for confidence-building measures between the parties. At the same time, he reaffirmed the points made by Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili in a letter sent to me in the aftermath of the 6 August missile incident in Tsitelubani, regarding the need for a comprehensive review of the peace process in order to overcome the current status quo. In his statement to the Assembly, Mr. Saakashvili expressed his expectation that such a review should lead to fundamental changes in the negotiation and peacekeeping formats, create a new legal framework, establish a

plan for the return of internally displaced persons and promote economic rehabilitation, security and direct dialogue, without preconditions, between the parties. President Saakashvili also outlined the parameters of the Government's proposals for a final settlement, namely the right to self-governance for those living in Abkhazia within Georgian international borders under international guarantees, constitutional changes to enshrine the protection of minorities, including language rights, the protection of culture, language and education, and a robust role for the European Union.

III. Developments in the Mission's area of responsibility

Gali sector

9. The security situation in the Gali sector witnessed a relative improvement and has been generally calm. At the same time, a sense of volatility and unpredictability remained. The Mission maintained a vigorous, irregular pattern of patrolling throughout the sector, including deployment of temporary forward patrol bases to enhance visibility and reaction capabilities.

10. From 20 to 24 August, the Abkhaz side conducted a military exercise, which culminated in a live firing exercise in the Novaglou training area in the restricted-weapons zone on 24 August. In this context, a violation report was issued for overflights by two L-39 jet aircraft over the restricted-weapons zone on 20 August. The Mission monitored the live firing exercise of 24 August, involving about 400 to 500 troops and anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapon systems, which were below the threshold of 81mm established by the 1994 Moscow Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces (see S/1994/583, annex I). During the same live firing exercise, two L-39 jet aircraft flew in the vicinity of the training area and fired on targets in the Black Sea, and machine gun firing took place from an MI-8 and an MI-24 helicopter. UNOMIG urged the Abkhaz side to avoid the use of such weapons in the vicinity of the restricted-weapons zone.

11. During the exercise, the Abkhaz side reported a series of overflights by unmanned aerial vehicles over the Gali district and the Ochamchira training area. A UNOMIG patrol heard a sound similar to an unmanned aerial vehicle on 24 August while observing the Abkhaz military exercise, but was unable to make visual recognition. The Abkhaz side reported an attempt to shoot down unmanned aerial vehicles on 23 August. On 30 August, the CIS peacekeeping forces also observed a light aircraft flying along the ceasefire line in the vicinity of Tagiloni Village.

12. In July, the Abkhaz side restricted the movement of the local population across the ceasefire line, closing all crossing points except the Inguri Bridge for one week. Five crossing points were reopened by the end of July, but restrictions on the transportation of goods remained. As on previous occasions, the Mission has raised this issue with the de facto authorities, as such restrictions caused unnecessary hardship for the local population.

13. Criminal incidents reported to UNOMIG patrols during the period under review included one killing, three robberies and two abductions. The Mission also received and followed up on reports of alleged forced labour and arbitrary taxation during the hazelnut harvest season. It has called upon the Abkhaz de facto authorities to take steps to put an end to this arbitrary practice.

14. The United Nations police continued to liaise with the Abkhaz de facto militia in the Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts. They conducted six training courses in policing methods and practices, which were attended by 50 de facto law enforcement officers. The United Nations police conducted a joint patrol and four monitoring visits to local de facto law enforcement facilities and handed over two sets of forensic and police tactical equipment donated by the Government of Italy.

15. The Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, continued to follow closely the issues that have an impact on the life of residents in the Gali district. It monitored conscription practices in the district, as well as the situation related to the freedom of movement of local residents and the issue of language of instruction, which remained a concern to the local population and those willing to return. The Office continued regular monitoring visits to the Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli de facto police detention centres.

Zugdidi sector

16. The situation in the Zugdidi sector remained calm, with occasional tension rising in connection with a series of incidents involving the Georgian authorities and the CIS peacekeeping forces. Two such incidents occurred on 25 and 28 July, when a convoy of Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel, en route to the upper Kodori Valley through the security zone, refused to be subjected to checking procedures by CIS peacekeeping forces personnel at post 302. The Georgian side stressed that post 302 was an observation post, not a check post, and therefore had no authority to stop or check Georgian vehicles. It also argued that those procedures were causing undue inconvenience to the local population moving between the Svaneti and Zugdidi districts. The CIS peacekeeping force argued that stringent measures were required because of a lack of notification by the Georgian side of movements between the upper Kodori Valley and the Zugdidi sector. Tensions subsided following a meeting on 30 July between the CIS peacekeeping force Commander and Georgian officials, during which measures for the verification of convoys were mutually agreed.

17. On 28 August, a CIS peacekeeping force patrol in the restricted-weapons zone was involved in a traffic accident with a local vehicle. While escorted to the Zugdidi police headquarters, the patrol was intercepted and disarmed by an armed contingent of Georgian law enforcement personnel and subsequently detained. The Chief of Staff of the CIS peacekeeping force was initially denied access to the police station, as was the UNOMIG patrol that responded to the situation. The detained CIS peacekeeping forces personnel were released several hours later, following discussions between the Georgian authorities and the Chief of Staff of the CIS peacekeeping force. The Georgian side claimed that the CIS peacekeeping force had violated the Moscow Agreement by not providing prior notification of its patrol in the restricted-weapons zone. The Commander of the CIS peacekeeping force subsequently claimed that the Georgian side had violated the Moscow Agreement by interfering with the CIS peacekeeping force's freedom of movement in the conflict zone. The Chief Military Observer of UNOMIG convened a Joint Fact-Finding Group investigation into the incident, but the Georgian side refused to participate on the grounds that the incident was self-explanatory and did not require further investigation. For its part, the CIS peacekeeping force suspended patrolling in the restricted-weapons zone, which included two to three patrols per week for the last 13 years of the peacekeeping operation. The Moscow Agreement does lend itself to

differing interpretations with regard to article 2 (f) subjecting the movement of the CIS peacekeeping force in the restricted-weapons zone to "agreement with the parties" and article 4 providing the CIS peacekeeping force with "freedom of movement in the security zone and the restricted-weapons zone". At the same time, from a peacekeeping perspective, only the unrestricted freedom of movement is consistent with the mandate to verify whether both sides comply with their undertaking under the Moscow Agreement not to deploy heavy weapons in the restricted-weapons zone. It is hoped that the Georgian Government and the CIS peacekeeping force will come to an understanding that will enable the peacekeeping mechanism to maintain its effectiveness.

18. On 20 September, an armed clash between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides took place outside the zone of conflict. Seven Abkhaz personnel were apprehended by the Georgian side, one was wounded and two former Russian officers reportedly on contract with the Abkhaz forces were killed. The two sides provided different versions of the incident. The Abkhaz de facto authorities claimed it to be a raid by Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel on the Abkhaz training camp co-located with a de facto border guard post at Bokhundjara, within Abkhaz-controlled territory, close to the administrative boundary. The Georgian side said that a group of Abkhaz "saboteurs" had entered Georgian-controlled territory to disrupt work on the road to the upper Kodori Valley, currently under construction, in an attempt to isolate the valley from the rest of Georgia. It indicated that after an initial confrontation followed by an intense pursuit, the final clash had taken place on the Georgian-controlled side of the administrative boundary. With the consent of both sides, UNOMIG is currently carrying out its own independent fact-finding efforts to clarify the circumstances of the incident.

19. On the same day, just after the incident described above, the CIS peacekeeping force post 302, together with UNOMIG temporary observation post "Golf", was surrounded and, in effect, neutralized, by a sizeable and well armed force of about 70 to 80 personnel and vehicles of the Georgian Criminal Police and Ministry of Internal Affairs troops who took control of the barriers. CIS peacekeeping personnel on the post, being heavily outnumbered, did not respond. Shortly thereafter, a large convoy of 37 light vehicles and 1 truck was able to pass through at high speed in the direction of Zugdidi. It later transpired that the convoy transported the seven Abkhaz personnel apprehended during the clash described in the paragraph above. The CIS peacekeeping force Commander strongly protested to UNOMIG the actions by the Georgian authorities as an attempt to prevent forcibly the CIS peacekeeping personnel from fulfilling their mandated functions. UNOMIG has conveyed to the Georgian Government its view that the ceasefire and separation of forces regime should be maintained and strengthened, including the notification and verification procedures applicable to the security and restricted-weapons zone.

20. On 21 August, the Georgian authorities reported the radar tracking of two L-39-type jet aircraft crossing the ceasefire line, overflying Zugdidi town and returning to the Abkhaz side of the ceasefire line. The Abkhaz side denied any involvement and there has been no independent verification of the incident. The Georgian side has been asked to provide additional information to allow an investigation into the incident.

21. During the reporting period, the UNOMIG temporary observation post, co-located with CIS peacekeeping post 302 in the Zugdidi security zone, observed

32 ground movements of Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel in the direction of the upper Kodori Valley, of which 14 were notified by the Georgian side. During the same period, 29 overflights through the security zone in the direction of the upper Kodori Valley were observed, of which 10 were notified. Four violation reports were issued to the Georgian side for the movement of isolated military vehicles in the security zone. While it is understood that many of those movements are related to the rotation of personnel in the upper Kodori Valley, it nevertheless remains very important that the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs notify UNOMIG fully and promptly about movements of its armed personnel through post 302/temporary observation post "Golf", as previously agreed.

22. Criminal incidents reported to UNOMIG military observers during the period under review included two killings, two robberies and two abductions.

23. The United Nations police held 49 training courses in crime scene management, self-defence, suspect management, traffic police matters, weapons handling and other vital policing skills. Almost 400 Georgian law enforcement officers participated. United Nations police conducted 34 joint patrols with local law enforcement officers within the security zone and 66 monitoring visits to local police facilities. It also continued to implement its community policing and crime prevention programmes by arranging four meetings of crime prevention bodies and a drug-abuse prevention course at a youth camp in the Zugdidi district.

Kodori Valley

24. The unidentified armed groups sighted in the lower Kodori Valley on 25 June (see S/2007/439, para. 28) were confirmed in July by the Georgian side as Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel and withdrawn on 20 July.

25. On 18 July, UNOMIG reactivated its Kodori Team Base in Adjara, in the upper Kodori Valley, enhancing the Mission's monitoring capability in the valley and contributing to transparency. Daily patrols to both the upper and lower Kodori Valley did not observe the presence of any heavy weapons in the area. As at 7 August, the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that its strength in the upper Kodori Valley was at 576. UNOMIG continued its efforts to verify the strength and ascertain whether the situation in the valley was in line with the 1994 Moscow Agreement. The Georgian authorities continued construction of a new road bypassing the Khida Pass (the entry point to the Kodori Valley from the Georgian-controlled side), which is expected to be completed by October and will allow year-round access to the upper Kodori Valley.

26. From 19 to 21 September, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force undertook a joint patrol of the lower and upper Kodori Valley, which was conducted with security guarantees by both sides. UNOMIG did not observe the presence of any heavy military weapons.

27. On 21 August, the Georgian side reported that its radar in Tbilisi had traced an unidentified aircraft entering the Kodori Valley from the Russian Federation and crossing the Klukorski Pass in the direction of Tkvarcheli. In order to investigate the incident, the Georgian side was requested to provide the radar report. While the report was duly provided, inadequate technical details in the report did not allow for an accurate interpretation and the Georgian side has been asked to provide additional information.

28. On 24 August, Georgian mass media reported that an unidentified aircraft had violated Georgian airspace in the upper Kodori Valley on 22 August and had been shot down by Georgian border guards in the area. On 25 August, the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed that incursion, but was unable to confirm that the aircraft had been shot down. According to Georgian officials, border guards had fired several bursts from a machine gun at the aircraft, but no wreckage was subsequently found.

29. On 1 September, the CIS peacekeeping force reported hearing helicopter sounds in the lower Kodori Valley, and one Abkhaz militiaman claimed to have observed a Georgian helicopter near Tsebelda village in the lower Kodori Valley. No independent confirmation of the report was available. The CIS peacekeeping force launched two helicopter patrols in the area that same day and reported observing signs of the presence of personnel and equipment at various places on the heights north of CIS peacekeeping force checkpoint 106 in the lower Kodori Valley, including a satellite antenna in the vicinity of Achamkhara ridge north of checkpoint 106. The Georgian side responded that those locations were not occupied by Georgian personnel. Investigation by UNOMIG patrols to the Kodori Valley is ongoing.

Mission-wide developments

30. Weekly quadripartite meetings remained suspended (see S/2007/15, para. 26). The Joint Fact-Finding Group has nine cases open, four of which are awaiting closure. Except for the investigation into the disappearance of David Sigua (see para. 5 above), work on all other cases remains suspended. The Georgian side has called on UNOMIG to convene a Joint Fact-Finding Group investigation into 55 cases of missing persons in Gali town and district (26 of which date back to the period 1993-1994).

IV. Cooperation with the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States

31. UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force continued to maintain close cooperation in fulfilling their respective mandates. The CIS peacekeeping force continued to provide an escort for UNOMIG personnel through the lower Kodori Valley during regular rotation of its Kodori Team Base. The CIS peacekeeping force also provided assistance to the Mission's temporary forward bases, which were established periodically adjacent to CIS peacekeeping force checkpoints on both sides of the ceasefire line.

V. Human rights issues

32. During the reporting period, the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, continued its efforts to promote human rights protection and to provide support to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It continued to conduct regular monitoring visits to detention facilities, monitor court trials and provide legal advisory services to the local population. The Office followed up on individual cases related to due process and the right to a fair trial, arbitrary detention, illegal occupation of property, housing and property rights, freedom of

religion and the right to work. Over the reporting period, the Office's city office in Sukhumi received 113 visitors. Property-related issues continued to form the bulk of plaintiffs' claims.

33. The Office continued to support implementation, in cooperation with local NGOs, of four projects in the framework of the human rights programme funded by the Government of Switzerland. From July to September, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Georgia, it conducted on-the-job training for a Sukhumi-based television station. The Office organized eight workshops on proposal writing for the mini-grants competition on human rights and civic education projects in the framework of an OSCE-supported project implemented through a local NGO. A mini-grants competition for schools in all districts of Abkhazia was announced on 10 September and human rights libraries are also being set up as part of that project. The Human Rights Centre at Sukhumi University continued its activities, including providing the library and computer centre for the public, and plans to resume its training courses on human rights in October.

VI. Humanitarian and rehabilitation activities

34. Through its Trust Fund, the Mission procured X-ray equipment for the Ochamchira hospital, which was funded by the Government of Germany. The Mission also awarded the contract for construction of the new police station and model training centre in Lia village in the Zugdidi district, which will be built as part of the second phase of the European Commission-funded rehabilitation programme. During the reporting period, the Trust Fund Project Review Committee approved seven projects and concluded five memorandums of understanding designed to implement the following projects: improved conditions for detainees in Dranda prison; rehabilitation of the water supply system for Ingiri village in the Zugdidi district, which houses 1,100 residents, including 700 internally displaced persons; installation of a water access system for Tsarche village and school in the Tkvarcheli district, which is home to more than 1,000 people; and rehabilitation of high-voltage power lines in Khamishkuri village in the Khoba district.

35. United Nations agencies and international NGOs continued to assist vulnerable groups affected by the conflict on the Abkhaz-controlled side of the ceasefire line. The United Nations Development Programme successfully completed the rehabilitation of water supply systems in Gali and Ochamchira towns and in Bedia and Agubedia villages, providing more than 11,000 people with access to safe drinking water and technical training for those communities in sustainable maintenance of water supply systems. In September, the World Food Programme resumed distribution of take-home rations for over 1,000 most at-risk school children in 82 vulnerable schools. In line with its exit strategy, on-site feeding was phased out by July. The agency also helped poor rural households to rehabilitate basic agricultural infrastructure and, in collaboration with World Vision International, provided food to 13,000 people in the Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts. Food was also provided to 70 tuberculosis patients in the Gulripshi hospital as part of a joint project with Médecins Sans Frontières.

36. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), together with the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, continued implementation of four projects in the Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts related to supporting agriculture, school rehabilitation and community centres, and to raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence. In September, UNHCR began a vocational training centre project with the NGO Acción Contra el Hambre in the Gali and Tkvarcheli districts. It also provided a training session on its mandate for local NGOs in Sukhumi. The Danish Refugee Council continued distributing construction materials for a warm dry room to 180 households and food-security grants for 130 households in the Gali district. Other ongoing activities included 12 small-scale community infrastructure projects using the community mobilization method, 9 grants for small- and medium-scale enterprises and 200 microcredit projects in the Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts. The Norwegian Refugee Council initiated its Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance project in Abkhazia, with most cases related to issues of housing, inheritance, documentation, dismissal from the workplace and social allowances. The rehabilitation of the Okumi School was completed in September, and of the eight remaining schools throughout Abkhazia, the rehabilitation of two others is close to completion. The Norwegian Refugee Council also continued its shelter assistance project in Okumi village for 80 beneficiaries. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation continued to support rehabilitation projects by Première Urgence in the Gali, Ochamchira, Tkvarcheli and Sukhumi districts. Première Urgence commenced rehabilitation of five tuberculosis patients' houses, in cooperation with Médecins Sans Frontières and support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and another small-scale rehabilitation project in Zugdidi, funded by the Government of France.

VII. Support issues

37. During the reporting period, UNOMIG continued its HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness campaign through its induction training for all Mission personnel. The Mission also conducted a one-week capacity-building training session in all sectors, led by two HIV/AIDS experts from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the Secretariat. The Mission Training Cell and Medical Team, in conjunction with the HIV/AIDS task force, continued to facilitate distribution of HIV/AIDS materials. The Mission also participated in the annual United Nations HIV/AIDS workshop.

38. Through its gender focal points, UNOMIG continued to sensitize its personnel on gender issues through regular broadcasts. During the reporting period, 28 uniformed and 5 civilian personnel (26 male and 7 female) were briefed on gender equality in peacekeeping during their induction training.

39. A Conduct and Discipline Team was constituted in August 2007 and the Mission has since developed a risk-assessment tool for misconduct by UNOMIG staff as well as a strategy for internal and public awareness-raising. All Mission members, both local and international, have completed a certified standards of conduct training course and an electronic library containing guidelines relevant to conduct and discipline issues has been made available to all UNOMIG staff.

VIII. Financial aspects

40. The General Assembly, by its resolution 61/283, appropriated the amount of $35 million for the maintenance of UNOMIG for the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIG beyond 15 October 2007, the cost of maintaining the Mission until 30 June 2008 would be limited to the amount approved by the Assembly.

41. As at 30 June 2007, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNOMIG amounted to $8.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1,543.8 million.

42. Reimbursement for medical facilities provided to UNOMIG by the Government of Germany had been made for the period until 31 December 2006. As at 1 October 2007, the amount owed for the medical facilities totalled $43,950.

IX. Observations

43. While the relative calm observed in the zone of conflict since my last report to the Security Council contrasted favourably with the situation described in my previous reports, the deadly clash that occurred on 20 September is the most serious incident involving the Georgian and Abkhaz sides in many years. At the time of writing, the UNOMIG fact-finding team has not yet completed its work and it is therefore too early to assign responsibilities. I note, however, that the incident took place in a location outside the area of responsibility of UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force. I recall, in this respect, the recommendations made by UNOMIG following the 11 March incident in the upper Kodori Valley aiming at bringing the areas between the zone of conflict and the Kodori Valley, which are currently outside the purview of UNOMIG, under international monitoring. I hope that, subject to the results of an ongoing feasibility assessment, other UNOMIG recommendations, such as the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles and artillery radar, can be implemented. While such monitoring offers no guarantee that the deep political tensions that underpin the conflict would not translate into violence, it has proven an invaluable mitigating factor in the past and its benefits should be extended as much as possible.

44. In the same context, I would like to stress the need to prevent the weakening of the ceasefire and separation of forces regime. We will continue to insist on the obligation of both sides to keep their armed personnel clear from one another, observe the restrictions of the restricted-weapons zone and respect the agreed notification and verification procedures. In this respect, I am concerned by the fact that the quadripartite meetings between the two sides, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force, have not yet resumed. Their continued suspension and absence of security dialogue at the operational level can only compound the negative developments noted in the present report. This point is illustrated by the dangerous stand-offs that have occurred during the reporting period between the Georgian side and the CIS peacekeeping force. While the differences that have surfaced with regard to the location and status of the post of the CIS peacekeeping force or the interpretation of the Moscow Agreement are relevant, they should be addressed through dialogue. They can and must be settled constructively and in a way that protects the ceasefire regime. Let me reiterate in this respect that our emphasis on

the need to avoid any step that could lead to a confrontation between the two sides stems primarily from the position, repeatedly articulated by both sides, that a military resolution of the conflict is neither possible nor desirable. It also stems from our own conviction that force and the threat of force will not advance either the interest of a political settlement or that of the sides.

45. With regard to the contacts between the two sides, the situation remains disappointing. I welcome the Joint Fact-Finding Group's investigation into the disappearance of David Sigua and the dialogue on humanitarian and rehabilitation issues which has resumed since the June meeting of the Group of Friends, with the participation of the two sides. At the same time, one cannot but observe that this dialogue, however productive it is when it takes place, remains overshadowed by developments, including those mentioned in the present report, that generate distrust. In this regard, I want to make it clear that the confidence-building approach taken by the United Nations and endorsed by the Security Council is not a way to elude political issues, but a way to make their resolution possible; the alternative is further confrontation. I take note of Georgia's proposal to review the peace process and express the openness of the United Nations to discussing all ideas intended to promote a lasting resolution of the conflict.

46. Meanwhile, I believe that the presence of UNOMIG continues to contribute to security in the conflict zone and efforts by the international community to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict. I therefore recommend that the UNOMIG mandate be extended for six months, until 15 April 2008.

47. In conclusion, let me thank once again the Group of Friends, which has continued to make a key contribution to the work of UNOMIG. I also wish to thank my Special Representative, Jean Arnault, the Chief Military Observer, Major General Niaz Muhammad Khan Khattak, and all the women and men of UNOMIG for their continuing and tireless work in often difficult and volatile conditions.

Annex

Countries providing military observers and civilian police personnel (as at 1 October 2007)

Country	*Military observers*
Albania	3
Austria	2
Bangladesh	8
Bolivia	1
Croatia	2
Czech Republic	5
Denmark	5
Egypt	6
France	3
Germany	15
Greece	5
Hungary	7
Indonesia	4
Jordan	7
Lithuania	2
Moldova	1
Mongolia	1
Nepal	1
Pakistan	11[a]
Poland	5
Republic of Korea	7
Romania	2
Russian Federation	4
Sweden	3
Switzerland	4
Turkey	5
Ukraine	5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	5
United States of America	2
Uruguay	3
Yemen	1
Total	**133**

[a] Including the Chief Military Observer.

Country	*Civilian police personnel*
Czech Republic	2
Germany	4
Ghana	1
Philippines	2
Poland	2
Russian Federation	2
Sweden	2
Switzerland	2
Ukraine	2[a]
Total	**19**

[a] Including the Senior Police Adviser.

Map No. 3837 Rev. 55 UNITED NATIONS
October 2007

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section